

## SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

### **Capitol plan: Let public use employee lot**

By Rebecca Walsh

The Salt Lake Tribune

There's a rat-in-a-maze feeling about trying to find parking at Utah's Capitol.

With public lots crunched by construction and hundreds of construction workers' cars occupying prized spots on the street, lobbyists, reporters and the public have to drive in circles and break traffic laws to park on busy days.

State Administrative Services Director D'Arcy Dixon Pignanelli has proposed a short-term fix - opening up a state employee parking lot to the public during the two-month legislative session and busing those workers from a Triad Center parking garage.

The idea leaves many beaten-down state workers cold. But Pignanelli says something has to be done before the 2006 Legislature starts next January. She figures building a bridge from that employee parking lot down to the Capitol Plaza, renting a Triad Center garage and running a shuttle bus will cost about \$130,000.

"This is messy. It's not perfect," said Pignanelli, who is a Capitol Hill resident and has an underground Capitol parking space. Pignanelli raised the idea at a recent Capitol Preservation Board subcommittee meeting. "It's an obvious problem. We're just trying to put some solutions on the table."

During the legislative session, about 2,500 cars try to squeeze into 1,000 spaces. And the run on parking probably will only get worse: Neighbors around the Capitol have petitioned Salt Lake City to turn their public street parking into monitored spots that require resident stickers.

State employees know the problem well. In that northeast parking lot, they double park and change their work hours to beat the crush.

"The problem is so bad now, there's no good fix for it," said computer specialist Greg Shoop. "Anything they can do would be a good thing."

Still, workers are skeptical of a wintertime shuttle service. And many may be reluctant to go along due to lingering bad feelings about state lawmakers' decision to cut off a generous retirement benefit. They already feel put-upon.

Shoop figures many state workers will simply park in the surrounding neighborhoods to avoid the inconvenience of a shuttle.

But that option may end soon. Salt Lake City Councilman Eric Jergensen, who represents the Capitol Hill and Avenues neighborhoods, says the city is processing a request from the neighbors to curtail public parking on West Capitol street, Wall Street and 500 North. Jergensen said the neighbors are tired of having their driveways and crosswalks and corners blocked.

"It is really amazing what some people will do to park. Had there been a fire in one of those homes during the Legislature, it would have been almost impossible to fight it," Jergensen said. "The dearth of parking at the Capitol causes tremendous strain on those neighborhoods."

Pignanelli acknowledges her bridge-shuttle solution is only temporary. She has suggested building a parking structure in the northeast corner. To pay for it, she proposes taking \$20 million from an estimated \$30 million for the upgrade of the State Office Building.

In the end, the parking debate will hinge on money. Pignanelli hopes lawmakers will set aside money for the project.

Senate President John Valentine believes the funding could come from Capitol reconstruction contingency funds. He also suggests giving state employees a bonus if

they use the shuttle - potentially adding to the final price tag.

"It's going to be a dollar figure issue," Pignanelli said.

Capitol parking woes

The problem: Lack of parking at the Capitol because of construction

Proposed solution: Open employee lot to the public, bus state workers from the Triad Center downtown

Cost: About \$130,000

Not happy: State employees

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